

Proposed Bill No. 977

An act concerning craft manufacturers of alcoholic liquor

March 5, 2015

Dear Legislator,

Thank you for taking the time to talk about the positive benefits of onsite sales at Connecticut craft distilleries. Our request is to allow minimal bottled spirit sales to people visiting Connecticut distilleries. This would be consistent with Connecticut laws regarding breweries and vineyards. This is an import revenue source and is also important to providing a positive experience to those visiting distilleries here in Connecticut.

Currently the craft distilling industry is still in its infancy. It is about where the brewing industry was 15 or 20 years ago. Fairly recently some laws for the brewing industry in Connecticut changed, and as a result a lot of small breweries are starting up. Our hope is that changing the distilling law will have the same effect for the distilling industry. This will create jobs, increase revenue for local farms and distilleries and also increase tax revenue for the state.

On site sales of spirits at a Connecticut licensed manufactures is critical to success of small artisan distilleries. New York, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and most of the country allow onsite sales. Connecticut is at a disadvantage to attract this growing industry. The lack of onsite sales is a major obstacle to a startup distillery.

Allowing visitors to take home Connecticut made spirits gives consumers the opportunity to fully experience Connecticut made liquor and ultimately seek out these products at their local liquor stores and restaurants. It is the expectation of visitors that they would be able to purchase products at the end of a tour because you can do it at a brewery or vineyard. Why is this not possible at a distillery? Onsite sales will give this emerging industry an opportunity to grow here in Connecticut.

With that being said, I would suggest the deletion of the part of the bill that says "nor more than 5 gallons of alcoholic liquor in any two-month period." Breweries and wineries only have a per day limit. In this bill there is a per day limit of 1.5 liters which is adequate and makes it congruent with breweries and vineyards. I do not see any reasonable way to track what a person buys during a two month period. That restriction seems to be discriminatory and unenforceable. Thank you for your time.

Respectfully,

Eric Kotowski

Elm City Distillery LLC

President

53 Capital Drive

Wallingford, CT 06492